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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4425

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, IY, IIS
SUBJ: STATE OF SIEGE

REF: STATE 08554

85504 - (AID)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/LR

REVIEWED BY me DATE 4-22-83
ADJUTANT GENERAL DATE 5-11-73
TS AUTH. _____ REASON(S) _____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED/RELEASABLE ☒
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS _____

SUMMARY: REVIEW OF FILES SHOWS THAT "STATE OF SIEGE" COMPLETELY FALSE ON ABSENCE OF ARCHBISHOP OF MONTEVIDEO AT MASS FOR MISTRIONE IN CATHEDRAL, AND ON CATHOLIC CRITICISM OF PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM. IN FACT, ARCHBISHOP OF MONTEVIDEO OFFICIATED AT MASS FOR MISTRIONE HELD IN CATHEDRAL ON AUGUST 22, 1970; IF HIS CHAIR WAS EMPTY, IT WAS BECAUSE HE WAS STANDING AT ALTAR. HE DID NOT RPT NOT ATTEND MORE WIDELY PUBLICIZED MASS FOR MISTRIONE IN JESUIT CHURCH THREE DAYS BEFORE, OFFICIATED BY PAPAL NUNCIUS, BUT IN CONTEXT THIS CANNOT BE TAKEN TO INDICATE OPPOSITION. WHILE HIERARCHY CONDEMNED MISTRIONE MURDER, IT NEVER CRITICIZED OR EVEN COMMENTED ON USAID PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER MISTRIONE MURDER, HIERARCHY HAS CRITICIZED GOV TREATMENT OF PRISONERS IN CONTEXT OF GENERAL CRITICISM OF ALL VIOLENCE AND CALLS FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION. END SUMMARY.

1. IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL, A CHRONOLOGY OF CATHOLIC CHURCH ACTIVITIES REFERRING TO THE MISTRIONE MURDER ON AUGUST 10 1970 IS PROVIDED BELOW. CATHOLIC STATEMENTS ON TERRORISM IN GENERAL MADE WELL BEFORE OR AFTER THE MISTRIONE MURDER ARE NOT REPORTED

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IN DETAIL. IF REQUESTED, NEWCLIPS TO SUPPORT THE CHRONOLOGY CAN BE PROVIDED.

2. AUGUST 6, 1970, THREE PRIESTS (HAROLD PONCE DE LEON, VICAR OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MONTEVIDEO; ISMAEL RIVAS, FORMER PARISH PRIEST OF THE CATHEDRAL; AND JESUIT JUSTO ASIAIN) APPEARED ON TV OFFERING TO MEDIATE BETWEEN THE GOV AND THE "UPAMAROS". FATHER PONCE DE LEON COMMENTED TO NEWSPAPER "ACCION", "OUR MEDIA-TION FORMULA WAS OFFERED ON A PERSONAL BASIS, SO AS NOT TO INVOLVE THE CHURCH HIERARCHY, BUT OUR ACTIONS WERE KNOWN BY MONS. PARTELLI, ACTG. ARCHBISHOP OF MONTEVIDEO". FYI: THE REAL ARCHBISHOP OF MONTEVIDEO IS CARDINAL BARRIERI WHO HAS BEEN SICK FOR MANY YEARS AND HAS NO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN URUGUAYAN CHURCH AFFAIRS. END FYI

3. ON AUGUST 7, 1970, THE "COMISION PERMANENTE" OF THE URUGUAYAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE PUBLISHED A DECLARATION SIGNED BY MONS. PARTELLI AS PRESIDENT, MONS. BACCINO, BISHOP OF SAN JOSE, AS VICE PRESIDENT, AND MONS. RUBIO, AUXILIARY BISHOP OF MONTEVIDEO, AS SECRETARY, IN WHICH THEY CRITICIZE ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE (INCLUDING "AT TIME ILL-MEASURED REPRESSIONS; TORTURE; DETENTION OF UNION LEADERS WITHOUT JUDICIAL GUARANTEES"). MAKE NO SPECIFIC MENTION OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM, BUT DEFINE MITRIONE AS A MEMBER OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS, AND ASK FOR A SOLUTION TO MANY PROBLEMS CONFRONTING URUGUAY "WITHOUT RESORT TO EXTREMES SUCH AS THE ONES WHICH PROMPT THIS DECLARATION, WHICH ARE UNACCEPTABLE FROM EVERY POINT OF VIEW". THIS QUOTE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BISHOPS' DECLARATION IS INTERPRETED BY US AS A CLEAR CONDEMNATION OF MITRIONE'S KIDNAPPING AND THE THREAT TO KILL HIM.

4. ON AUGUST 9, 1970 (PROBABLY AROUND 1 AM), MONS. RUBIO, AUXILIARY BISHOP OF MONTEVIDEO, DECLARED TO THE PRESS, "MY PRESENCE HERE AND MY WORDS IN THIS MOMENT EXPRES THE CONCERN OF THE CHURCH WITH THE ULTIMATUM WHICH EXPIRES TODAY AT MID-NIGHT AND WHICH ENDANGERS HUMAN LIFE. THE CHURCH WHICH IS USUALLY WORRIED ABOUT THE MEN WITHOUT FOOD OR CLOTHING, IS MOVED, TOGETHER WITH ALL HUMANITY, WHEN THE LIFE OF ONE MAN IS IN DANGER. TO ATTEMPT AGAINST A MAN'S LIFE IS AN EVIL FOR ALL MEN." PIS-CP RUBIO ENDS HIS DECLARATION ASKING FOR A PRAYER SO THAT GOD MAY SAVE ONE LIFE.

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5. ON AUGUST 12, 1970, THE SECRETARY OF THE METROPOLITAN CURIA WAS QUOTED IN THE NEWSPAPER "ACCION" AS SAYING "MONSIGNORES PARTELLI AND RUBION (THE AUXILIARY BISHOP) GAVE PERSONALLY TO THE (US) AMBASSADOR THE CONDOLENCES OF THE METROPOLITAN CURIA FOR THE UNJUST DEATH OF DAN MITRIONE."

6. ON AUGUST 16, 1970, AUXILIARY BISHOP RUBIO OFFICIATED AT A MASS FOR MITRIONE AT THE OUR LADY OF ROSARIO CHURCH IN THE PRADO SECTION OF MONTEVIDEO. DURING THE HOMILY BISHOP RUBION STRESSED THE GOSPEL NON-VIOLENCE DOCTRINE, HE QUOTED POPE PAUL'S BOGOTA DECLARATION THAT VIOLENCE WAS ANTI-CHRISTIAN AND AGAINST THE GOSPEL, AND ALSO REFERRED TO THE LATIN AMERICAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE AT MEDELLIN. BASED ON THE ABOVE BISHOP RUBIO ADDED "BASED IN THIS GOSPEL DOCTRINE WE CONDEMN THE MURDER OF DAN MITRIONE, AS WE ALSO CONDEMN THE MURDER OF ALL THE POLICEMEN WHO DIED IN THE LINE OF DUTY SERVING THE COUNTRY."

7. ON AUGUST 19, 1970, A MASS FOR MITRIONE WAS HELD AT THE JESUIT SCHOOL/PARISH CHURCH IN DOWNTOWN MONTEVIDEO, OFFICIATED BY MONS. SFPINSKI, THE PAPAL NUNCIO, IN ASSOCIATION WITH 16 OTHER PRIESTS. A CHAIR WAS RESERVED FOR THE ACTING ARCHBISHOP OF MONTEVIDEO, MONS. PARTELLI, BUT HE DID NOT ATTEND.

8. ON AUGUST 22, 1970, A MASS FOR MITRIONE WAS OFFICIATED AT THE CATHEDRAL BY ARCH BISHOP PARTELLI. THE HOMILY WAS DELIVERED BY MONS. DEL PIAZZO, PARISH PRIEST OF THE CATHEDRAL, AND NOT BY PARTELLI. DEL PIAZZO QUOTED POPE PAUL'S ANTI-VIOLENCE STATEMENT OF BOGOTA. A LAYMAN READ PARTS OF THE GOSPEL. THIS MASS WAS REPORTED IN THE MONTEVIDEO PRESS.

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9. THE HIERARCHY ISSUED NO STATEMENTS AT THE TIME OF THE MITRIONE MURDER, OR LATER, EITHER APPROVING OR OPPOSING THE TACTICS OF AID'S PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM. NOR WERE THERE ANY RUMORS OR GOSSIP CIRCULATING OF OPPOSITION BY THE CHURCH TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM. AS SHOWN ABOVE, HIERARCHY ISSUED STATEMENTS OPPOSING TERRORISM AND STRESSING NEED FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE BY GOVERNMENT, BUT DID NOT SPECIICALLY CRITICIZE POLICE TACTICS AT THE TIME OF THE MURDER. HOWEVER IN GENERAL DECLARATIONS OF THE BISHOPS! CONFERENCE, THE CHURCH HAS CRITICIZED GOU ANTI-SUBVERSIVE TACTICS. THIS WAS THE CASE IN A SEPTEMBER 15, 1969 DECLARATION AND MANY OTHERS SNCE. AFTER APRIL 1972, WHEN THE ARMY STARTED THE MAJOR ROUND-UP OF "TUPAMAROS", THE BISHIPS ALSO MADE DECLARATIONS AGAINST INTERROGATION PRACTICS OF THE GOU, IT SHOULD BE CLEAR HOWEVER THAT THESE DECLARATIONS WERE ALWAYS MADE IN GENERAL DOCUMENTS IN WHICH ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE SUCH AS TERRORISM, KIDNAPPING AND ALSO ECONOMIC INJUSTICE ARE ALSO CONDEMNED.

10. CHURCH DID BECOME INVOLVED IN TWO MINOR CONTROVERSIES AT THE TIME OF MITRIONE MURDER. JESUIT ASIAIN (REFERRED TO IN PARAGRAPH 2 ABOVE) WORKING IN TRYING TO MEDIATE MITRIONE RELEASE WAS PICKED UP WITH A KNOWN "TUPAMARO", BUT WAS LATER RELEASED; HIERARCHY WAS: NON-COMMITAL ON ISSUE; IN SALTO, PARISHIONERS HOLDING AMEMORIAL MASS ON AUGUST 11; FOR MITRIONE IN THEIR PARISH CHURCH COMPLAINED THAT IT HAD BEEN STOPPED BY A

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PRIEST REPRESENTING THE LOCAL BISHOP WHO TOLD THEM TO ATTEND INSTEAD A MASS FOR "NATIONAL PACIFICATION" THAT LOCAL BISHOP WAS HOLDING AT THE SAME TIME IN THE SALTO CATHEDRAL; MONTEVIDEO BISHOPS MADE NO COMMENT ON THIS INCIDENT.

11. ON AUGUST 14, 1970, A REUTER DISPATCH QUOTED WELL KNOWN LEFTIST BRAZILIAN BISHOP HELDER CAMARA AS SAYING "MINIMAL CHRISTIAN AND HUMAN SENSIBILITY MAKES US CONSIDER ACTIONS SUCH AS KIDNAPPINGS IN MONTEVIDEO AS ABSURD AND INHUMAN."

12. FYI: IN INTERVIEW WITH AMERICAN JOURNALIST HENRY PARKER PUBLISHED IN ARGENTINE MAGAZINE "PANORAMA" APRIL 14, 1973, COSTA GAVRAS CLAIMED THAT URUGUAYAN POLICE COMMISSIONER ALEJANDRO OTERO HAD STATED IN A BRAZILIAN MAGAZINE THAT IT WAS MITRIONE WHO "INTRODUCED THE SYSTEMATIC TORTURE TO URUGUAY." SHOULD THIS CHARGE BE REPEATED IN FILM, IT MAY BE NOTED THAT IN NEWSPAPER "EL DIA" OF AUGUST 15, 1970, ON FRONT PAGE, OTERO IN INTERVIEW TOTALLY DENIED MAKING ANY SUCH STATEMENTS, SAYING "THIS IS TOTALLY FALSE. I NEVER SAID ANYTHING LIKE THAT." IT IS OF INTEREST THAT DESPITE COSTA GAVRAS' CLAIM TO HAVE READ ALL OF MONTEVIDEO PAPERS ON MITRIONE CASE, HE IS STILL REPEATING STATEMENTS THAT WERE CLEARLY DENIED AND REPUDIATED BY THEIR SUPPOSED AUTHORS IN THESE SAME PAPERS. END FYI.
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